

## Helsinki Photomedia Conference 2014

### Union is strength.

### An Approach to the Photo Collective in Spain, 2000-2013

Although photography is often considered a solitary practice (the viewfinder is ultimately a one person's tool), the union of some photographers to produce and spread out their images is something frequent in history. The work done at many photographers' studios in the XIX century or by the first photo agencies that served images to the newspapers was, to a certain extent, collective. At the very least, different people did the capture and the image retouching. The work of the famous Bern and Hilla Betcher is also a result of a collective effort. It is evident that the social, political, historical context of the ancient practices has nothing to do with the one that many professionals find nowadays in the world of documentary or artistic photography. The photographic workflow and the theoretical environment that analyses these practices have changed substantially with the new technologies. However, the presence of photo collectives that function as working units is still abundant nowadays. Union, at least in photographic terms, seems to mean strength. In order to explore this phenomenon, I present the following analytical proposal.

As the title shows, this research paper focuses on a specific practice, country and period, which are the artistic and documentary Photo Collectives of Spain from 2000 to the present time. The case of study has been narrowed with the purpose of throwing some light on each element of the equation. This study is based on the consideration that the Spanish photography scene has changed considerably since 90', most evidently in the last ten years. New names in the practice and photographic study have appeared, significant photo festivals have been developed, the main museums and institutions of Spain have acquired photographic materials with study and exhibition purposes (despite some complications that are still present in this sense) and several photographic collectives are finding their own space within the Spanish photography scene.

The benefits of this new scenario operate in both directions. On one hand, we are witnessing how photographers are gathering to produce joint projects and publish the results of this communal work without giving up their individual practice. The collective workflow represents an alternative way for many media professionals and presents numerous advantages: They can share common spaces to work and also go out and photograph together. The editing is usually collective and more publishing opportunities appear when they present their work altogether. On the other hand, the Spanish photography scene seems to be more consolidated internationally since these groups are also serving as a vehicle to spread the individual work of their own members. Taking all this into consideration, this paper digs into the most relevant photo collectives from Spain that are currently active, focuses its attention into a particular case study: *Blankpaper*, and finally compares the workflow of these collectives with the ones from other countries that present similar circumstances.

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